

**City of Belmont
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING AUGUST 7, 2013
MINUTES**

The regular meeting of the Belmont Parks & Recreation Commission of August 7, 2013 was called to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Belmont City Hall Council Chambers.

I. ROLL CALL

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Vice Chair Wong, Commissioner (C) Sullivan, Youth Commissioner (YC) Fox, C Bortoli, & Michaels, Runyan and Block.

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Chair Wright

STAFF PRESENT: Parks and Recreation Director (PRD) Gervais and Secretary Saggau

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

C Bortoli moved, seconded by C Sullivan, to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of July 10, 2013. Vote 7-0 in favor.

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION/COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

C Bortoli reported on the Senior Advisory Committee meeting. The lunch program continues to do well and the seniors are excited about the upcoming improvement project to the Center.

PRD Gervais announced the following:

- The first Movie in the Park, Rise of the Guardians, will be held at the Twin Pines Park Meadow on Friday, August 9. Another movie will be shown on September 6. 4-H will be selling food as a fundraiser.
- Staff is moving ahead with the Davey Glen Project and asked the Commission to consider how they want to re-engage in the project.
- The Fall Activity Guide is out.
- The Little League team success was noted.

IV. AGENDA AMENDMENTS

None.

V. OLD BUSINESS

a. Consideration of Cancellation of the September Meeting

PRD Gervais noted this was brought to the Commission in June and the Commission asked that it be brought back to the August meeting. He explained staff is recommending cancellation of

the September meeting due to vacation schedules, the holiday week and the religious holiday. He noted the last Commission meeting canceled was July 2012.

Following Commission discussion the following motion was made.

C Sullivan moved, seconded by C Block, the September Parks & Recreation Commission meeting be canceled. Vote 7-0 in favor.

b. Trails, Pathways, and Walking Connections that are Identified on Paper but are not Established on the Ground

PRD Gervais reviewed the history of the paper trails project. He explained paper trails are public rights-of-way that exist on paper but have not been improved. There have been attempts to develop a system but there have been challenges. Completed accomplishments include a catalog and map of the trails and criteria to create a top 10 list. The City was awarded a \$5,000 grant from the County but not much progress was made. Challenges include lack of public interest, the project is no longer on the city priority list, construction funding, maintenance and liability, neighborhood resistance, and there is no lead department.

PRD Gervais said in order for this project to move forward it would need the following:

- Neighborhood or advocacy group to pursue it
- Return to City Priority List
- Resolution of legal issues
- Funding
- Evaluation of maintenance responsibilities

PRD Gervais said he believes when the timing is right this project will move forward and noted there are a couple of trails that have been completed.

PRD Gervais responded to Commission questions:

- The City has been offered, but not accepted, many of these trails and that means it is likely that the city can still claim them.
- Easements vary in width, length and purpose.
- The level of responsibility for the City likely increases if it is built or maintained by the City.
- Staff's opinion is that a pilot program would be a good approach to start.
- The history for each trail is unknown
- Open Space has different legal rules. Staff will check with City Attorney on the level of liability if there is activity on these trails.
- Staff does not believe there would be tax liabilities if the City takes these trails but will check into.
- This would not be acquiring property but asserting legal rights. The City has asserted these rights when necessary to work on sewer lines or on street right-of-ways.
- The top ten list was selected using a set criteria.
- The City Council put the project on the priority list in 2005 and a lot of work was done on it.
- Improved trails were included in the map to show all that exist.

- Liability for homeowners and whether the City has a legal requirement to protect them is unknown.
- Staff will check with other cities with trail systems to see how well they are working.
- Bicyclists are able to use improved trails, but many trails would have steep inclines or stairs which would limit their use.

YC Fox noted the trails do not seem to be in high demand. C Bortoli agreed and said he would wait for a neighborhood group to come to the City if they want to improve a trail.

C Michaels suggested branding the trails with something like One Belmont. He noted there are certain spots that could be valuable. He suggested increasing knowledge by posting notices of potential trails. The community may want it if they are aware it is available.

C Runyan stated she likes the idea but noted the city is currently working on other priorities and right now is not the time to make this back into a priority.

C Block agreed it is a great concept and expressed support for creating more walkways. He agreed with increasing awareness to the public and using signs. He suggested instead of building trails now the City put energy into increasing awareness and posting the map on the city's website.

C Sullivan agreed that this needs to come from the neighborhoods. He suggested bringing the idea to neighborhood associations to see if they want to take it up.

C Wong agreed the City does have higher priorities now but would like to keep this on the back burner and see if there is interest from the neighborhoods. He proposed after increasing awareness to the neighborhoods including this topic in the next survey.

Following Commission discussion it was decided that the following steps would be taken:

- Create signs for existing improved pathways
- Post information on City's website to increase awareness
- Call attention to the website when developed
- Check with City Attorney on questions raised
- Continue discussions and bring back to the Commission in a year

VI. NEW BUSINESS

a. Discussion of the Role of Youth on the Parks and Recreation Commission and in Local Government

PRD Gervais explained this topic came up when the City Council advertised for the vacant Parks & Recreation Youth Commission seat which led to their discussion on the role of youth commissioners and their role in local government. They requested the Parks & Recreation Commission review this topic and provide feedback.

Questions raised by the City Council were:

1. Should a mentor be assigned to each Youth Commissioner?

2. Should Youth Commissioners have more structure to their participation on the Commission including completing a project during their tenure?
3. What is the right role for youth on the Parks and Recreation Commission?
4. Should the Youth Commissioners be voting members of the Parks & Recreation Commission?
5. What is the right age for Youth Commissioners?
6. Should there be more turnover of Parks and Recreation Youth Commissioners?

PRD Gervais noted most other cities do not have youths on their Parks and Recreation Commission. Instead, they have a youth advisory board or commission. Belmont does have a youth community service group called VOICES. PRD Gervais noted the staff report included information on VOICES, Burlingame's Youth Advisory Committee and Millbrae's Youth Advisory Committee By-Laws.

PRD Gervais responded to Commission questions:

- Staff will collect feedback from past Youth Commissioners
- VOICES is a joint program of the Parks & Recreation Department and the library and their goal is community service. They help with community events. VOICES meets monthly to discuss leadership and the role of youth in the community.
- This issue came up when the City Council was trying to figure out what to do with the vacancy on the Commission.
- Some of the Youth Advisory Boards have voted on topics as a way to provide feedback to those bodies that make the deciding vote.

C Block spoke in support of getting feedback from every age range. He noted that prior Youth Commissioners were relatively quiet and he spoke in favor of having a mentor program so that the Youth Commissioners gain more confidence. C Block added the idea of creating an entirely new system is interesting but acknowledged it would be a lot of work.

C Runyan agreed having the voice of youths is critical. If the current structure remains she would be in favor of a mentoring program and suggested rotating the mentors. She also spoke in support of having a Youth Advisory Board because it would engage more youths in the community and provide a forum that would be less intimidating and get them involved in local politics.

YC Fox spoke in favor of having a mentor to help new Youth Commissioners learn the meeting process. She also spoke in support of a Youth Advisory Board but did not think it should be part of VOICES as that would change it. She explained a Youth Advisory Board would take up issues and VOICES focuses on community service. PRD Gervais questioned if a Sub-Committee of VOICES that wanted to serve on a Board could be considered. YC Fox added being on a Commission is a good way for youths to see how things work but an Advisory Board would be able to have more interaction for teens.

C Michaels expressed support for having mentors but questioned if there would be any concerns with the Brown Act. He agreed that a project would be a good idea for the Youth Commissioners and suggested presentations to peers, the Commission and City Council. He proposed the Youth Commission be a liaison to VOICES. He noted the Youth Commissioner could connect with people through the City website. C Michaels was in favor of Youth

Commissioner being able to vote. He preferred that older youths serve as Commissioners and suggested they be required to attend some Commission meetings before being appointed. Regarding turnover he noted there may be things that are meaningful to Youth Commissioners and perhaps they could continue to serve on an Ad-Hoc Committee to expand past a year.

C Bortoli said he likes the mentor idea but expressed concerned if this may influence the Youth Commissioner's vote. He noted rotating mentors may be a way to lessen the chance that would happen. He spoke in favor of community service but was not in favor of giving a homework assignment. He expressed support for Youth Commissioners being able to vote. He said he would lean towards older youths but did not have a problem with the 13-17 age limits. He was not in favor of a one-year limit noting that Youth Commissioners serving a second year would be more comfortable in their role.

C Sullivan noted that Youth Commission involvement has been limited and not given much feedback for that population. He noted it is a great opportunity for the right teenagers to get involved in their community and local government. He noted there have not been a lot of applicants and raising their requirements may be going in the wrong direction. He suggested getting the word out more and providing the tools to make it happen. A fun project for a Youth Commissioner may be a social site on the City's website and managing the feedback from the youths. He spoke in favor of a rotating mentorship and allowing Youth Commissioners to vote.

C Wong noted teens have a different perspective than the adults and they are on the Commission to learn this perspective. He questioned if they are sufficiently prepared to sit on the Commission and said he liked the idea of a rotating mentorship but also questioned the Brown Act concerns.

Discussion continued on mentorship and the possible influence on Youth Commissioners. It was noted it would be important for mentors to ask teens for their perspective rather than the mentor giving them a perspective.

PRD Gervais said that the mentorship program could be brought to the Commission in October if a new Youth Commissioner is appointed. He added that he would connect YC Fox with staff to discuss social media opportunities.

YC Fox said that a mentorship program would be more beneficial if mentors would provide tips on how to present ideas and it may be better to have one mentor to get comfortable with them.

PRD Gervais said he would check with the library because at one point they wanted to create a middle school political action group. There may be some spirit there to create a group through the library.

C Michaels questioned if there may be an opportunity for Commissioners to speak at a class and how to connect with the School District. PRD Gervais said that he and C Runyan have contacts with the schools and could offer that opportunity to them.

YC Fox noted Carlmont High School has an associated student body and that would be a good group to advertise the Youth Commissioner seat to them. C Sullivan stated he would like that there be a strong outreach for the Commission positions. Discussion continued on ways to recruit Youth Commissioners and ideas suggested included outreach at special events, identify

youths with leadership skills and let them know when recruitment is open and greater community awareness of the Commission.

VII. DEPARTMENT REPORTS

A. Questions and Comments

PRD Gervais reported the following:

- The bid opening went well for the Senior Center Improvement project that will start on October 7th and is scheduled to be finished by the end of the year.
- C Michaels comments regarding Twin Pines Park were distributed to the Commission.
- There have been discussions with Charles Armstrong School about a joint landscaping project.
- Tree work was completed in Twin Pines Park, a dead pine tree was removed in Alexander Park and some other dead pines will be removed that are dying due to Pine Bark beetles.
- Summer camps were extended an extra week this summer to accommodate the needs of parents.
- The swim program went well this year and a water polo camp was offered for the first time this summer.
- The Barrett Ad-Hoc Committee has been canceled for August and will reconvene in September.

B. Future Agenda Items

Davey Glen Park
Twin Pines Park
Manor House
Barrett

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:26 p.m.

Jonathan Gervais
Parks & Recreation Director